

# *Āghātapativinaya Sutta*

## Anger Management

The purpose of all Buddhist doctrines is to point out the path of liberation, inner peace. That is why the supreme Buddha says "**in the past and the present I preach only two things those are the suffering and the cessation from suffering**". Otherwise, the Buddha describes the path of happiness. Happiness depends on how far someone has overcome defilements such as greed and anger. Reducing greed and anger depends on reducing ignorance or delusion. Decreasing delusion depends on practicing mindfulness with the understanding of impermanence.

According to Buddhism, there are three main unwholesome roots which disturb our peace of mind. They are greed, anger and delusion. These three mental phenomena are the real enemies who disturb our peace of mind and steal our inner qualities. Therefore, we should always pay our attention to purify our mind from those negative thoughts. Whenever mind is polluted with those defilements, we have no inner peace since they steal our peace of mind. Then we live with suffering. Defeating evil thoughts is better than defeating thousands of enemies in the battle field. Hence, purifying mind from negative thoughts is the real victory that a person can gain in his life.

On the path of reducing three unwholesome roots, the Buddha explains primary techniques and an ultimate technique that we should practice in our day to day life. Practicing generosity and contemplating on impurity of body parts are primary techniques to reduce greed and lust. Further, practicing loving kindness and morality (discipline in behavior and speech) are primary techniques to overcome anger. Also, if someone sees the danger of defilements, he is able to reduce those negative thoughts such as desire and anger little by little in some levels. Practicing concentration and insight meditation is the technique to reduce delusion reflecting on impermanence with understanding of the dependent origination.

Among the main unwholesome roots, anger is one of the reasons mostly disturbs our inner peace. Hence, the Buddha always emphasized the importance of reducing anger. Practicing loving kindness is a main technique to reduce anger. That is why the Buddha says he who wishes to attain peace of mind should practice loving kindness. Until someone starts to practice loving kindness, he hasn't started the path of peace, liberation.

Here, in the discourse of *Āghātapativinaya*, Ven. Sariputta, who was the Buddha's chief disciple, explains five techniques to reduce anger when someone is angry with someone.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Step:**

There are some people those who are impure in their bodily behavior but pure in their verbal behavior. Thinking about the positive verbal part of their life we should subdue (reduce) our anger or hatred. This is one of the ways to overcome anger which disturbs our peace of mind.

An example is given in the discourse saying how to practice the first step. Just as when a person who makes use of things that are thrown away sees a rag in the road: Taking hold of it with his left foot and spreading it out with his right, he would tear off the sound part and go off with it. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his bodily behavior but pure in his verbal behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his verbal behavior. Thus, the hatred for him should be subdued.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Step:**

There are some people those who are impure in their verbal behavior but pure in their bodily behavior. Thinking about the positive bodily part of their life we should subdue (reduce) our anger (or hatred). This is also one of the ways to overcome anger which disturbs our peace of mind.

This is the second example given how to practice second step. Just as when there is a pool overgrown with slime & water plants, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. He would jump into the pool, part the slime & water plants with both hands, and then, cupping his hands, drink the water and go on his way. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his verbal behavior but pure in his bodily behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior. Thus, the hatred for him should be subdued.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Step:**

The third step is that some people are impure in their bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but they experience mental clarity & calm from time to time. Thinking those people's mental clarity helps us to reduce our anger.

Next example given in the discourse how to see the third person is; Just as when there is a little puddle in a cow's footprint, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. The thought would occur to him, 'Here is this little puddle in a cow's footprint. If I tried to drink the water using my hand or cup, I would disturb it, stir it up, & make it unfit to drink. What if I were to get down on all fours and slurp it up like a cow, and then go on my way?' So, he would get down on all fours, slurp up the water like a cow, and then go on his way. In the same way, when an individual is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior...the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus, the hatred for him should be subdued.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Step:**

Further, some people are impure in their bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and even they don't periodically experience mental clarity & calm. Hatred for a person of this sort should also be subdued (reduced).

The fourth example how we see the fourth person for reducing anger is; Just as when there is a sick man—in pain, seriously ill—traveling along a road, far from the next village & far from the last, unable to get the food he needs, unable to get the medicine he needs, unable to get a suitable assistant, unable to get anyone to take him to human habitation. Now suppose another person were to see him coming along the road. He would do what he could out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for the man, thinking, 'O that this man should get the food he needs, the medicine he needs, a suitable assistant, someone to take him to human habitation. Why is that? So that he won't fall into ruin right here.' In the same way, when a person is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who does not periodically experience mental clarity & calm, one should do what one can out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for him, thinking, 'O that this man should abandon wrong bodily conduct and develop right bodily conduct, abandon wrong verbal conduct and develop right verbal conduct, abandon wrong mental conduct and develop right mental conduct. Why is that? So that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he won't fall into the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, purgatory.' Thus, the hatred for him should be subdued.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Step:**

The 5<sup>th</sup> step to reduce anger is that some people are pure in their bodily behavior & their verbal behavior, and who periodically experience mental clarity & calm too. Hatred for a person of this sort should also be subdued thinking about his pure life.

The last example given in the discourse how to contemplate on fifth person to overcome anger is; Just as when there is a pool of clear water—sweet, cool, & limpid, with gently sloping banks, & shaded on all sides by trees of many kinds—and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. Having plunged into the pool, having bathed & drunk & come back out, he would sit down or lie down right there in the shade of the trees. In the same way, when an individual is pure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior...the purity of his verbal behavior, and to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus, the hatred for him should be subdued. An entirely inspiring individual can make the mind grow serene.

## Loving kindness (*mettā*)

According to Right Understanding (*Sammā ditthi*) which is the very first step of the eight-fold path, if we have Right Vision about the world and purification, we change our attitude into correct way which is Right Thoughts (*Sammā samkappa*). It means we practice loving kindness. Here we wish others success like ours. We look at others with kind eyes. If we can gradually develop loving kindness, we can overcome anger which especially disturbs our peace of mind. We mostly suffer because of others mistakes or misbehavior. If we can meditate on loving kindness, we can overcome suffering little by little. That is why the Buddha asks us to practice loving kindness at the very beginning of the path of mental health. In the discourse of *mettā*, the Buddha explains how far we have to practice loving kindness. It says we may have an ability to see any person as one's only son or daughter. It means our mind is very high in spirits and merits. More and more we practice loving kindness, we can overcome anger. As we have reduced anger which is one of the main causes of suffering, we can get rid of suffering. That means we are happy. Other people or incidents can't disturb our peace of mind. If we can live without struggling when unpleasant objects reach our senses, it is our proficiency that Buddhism emphasizes.

When we practice loving kindness, first of all we develop it for ourselves, like "May I be well, happy and peaceful. May I be free from suffering. May I be free from illness. May I be free from stress. May no harm come to me. May no problems come to me. May on difficulties come to me. May I succeed in all good. May I attain final bliss of liberation." Then we focus it to others who are in the universe like "May all beings be well, happy and peaceful. May all beings be free from suffering. May all beings be free from illness. May all beings be free from stress. May no harm come to them. May no problems come to them. May no difficulties come to them. May they succeed in all good. May they attain final bliss of liberation." When we practice this concept again and again, our mind is going to cool down. More and more we practice these positive thoughts, we are friendly with others and we have no stress in others mistakes or misbehavior. We are always ready to forgive others mistakes. Others' mistakes can't disturb our peace of mind. And others can't steal our good qualities that we have practiced in our Sansaric journey. We don't give any chance to an external person or thing to disturb our mantel health. It means we are strong in mindfulness of loving kindness.

In the discourse of *Mettānisamsa* (benefits of practicing loving kindness), the Buddha explains the eleven results of practicing loving kindness. He who practices loving kindness;

1. Sleeps comfortably (*Sukham supati*)
2. Wakes up comfortably (*Sukham patibujjhati*)
3. Doesn't see evil dreams (*Na pāpakam supinam passati*)
4. Is dear to and beloved by human beings (*Manussānam piyo hoti*)
5. Is just as dear to non-human beings (*Amanussānam piyo hoti*)
6. Deities guard him as a mother and father guard a child (*Devatā rakkhanti*)
7. Fire, poison and weapons don't affect him (*Nāssa aggi vā visam vā sattham vā khamati*)
8. Mind is easily concentrated (*tuvatam cittam samādhiyati*)
9. He appears to be calm and attractive (*Mukha vanno vippasidati*)

10. He dies unconfused (*Asammulho kālam karoti*)
11. If he didn't attain enlightenment, when he falls from this life, he reappears in the brahma realm (*Uttarim appativijjantho brahmaloko uppajjati*)

As the result of practicing loving kindness, other three qualities also increase which are compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic or altruistic joy (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*). These four things are called four boundless states. If a person practices these qualities, he can live like a brahma in the brahma realm. He is fully concentrated with happiness.

When we practice loving kindness, first we practice it for ourselves. For example;

May I be well, happy and peaceful!  
 May I be free from suffering!  
 May I be free from illness!  
 May I be free from stress!  
 May no harm come to me!  
 May no problems come to me!  
 May no difficulties come to me!  
 May I attain the final bliss of liberation!

After that we can practice loving kindness to others who are around us.

May my parents, relatives, friends and enemies be well, happy and peaceful!  
 May my parents, relatives, friends and enemies be free from suffering!  
 May my parents, relatives, friends and enemies be free from illness!  
 May my parents, relatives, friends and enemies be free from stress!  
 May no harm come to them!  
 May no problems come to them!  
 May no difficulties come to them!  
 May they attain the final bliss of liberation!

Finally, we can focus on all over the world like this,

May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!  
 May all beings be free from suffering!  
 May all beings be free from illness!  
 May all beings be free from stress!  
 May no harm come to them!  
 May no problems come to them!  
 May no difficulties come to them!  
 May they attain the final bliss of liberation!

At the beginning of practicing loving kindness, we do it as a sitting meditation. However, when we practice loving kindness continuously, we can practice it in all four postures.

That is why the Buddha said;

**When standing, walking, sitting, lying down,  
Whenever he feels free of tiredness  
Let him establish well this mindfulness  
This, it is said, is the Divine Abode.**

In this level, we always live immersed in loving kindness. When someone practices loving kindness, he doesn't stop in it, gradually compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity also develop in his mind.

If someone can live with above four kinds of sublime states (*Mettā, Karunā, Muditā, Upekkhā*), he lives like a brahma (or divine) being bearing a human body. Then he doesn't feel physical pain a lot because his mental state is very high and rich in merits and spirit. His mind is pure, quiet and calm. He is fully happy.

Developing concentration, by practicing some meditation techniques such as loving kindness meditation is one of the goals of spiritual path. However, gaining concentration with four sublime states is not the final destination of liberation, enlightenment, bliss of Nibbāna according to Buddhism. Tranquility (*Samatha*) helps to see the world reality as it is. Buddhism always encourages us to overcome suffering seeing world truth. The Buddha points out to see world as impermanence (*Anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha*) and egolessness (*Anatta*) through concentrated mind. If someone is clever to see that everything is impermanent with concentrated mind, his defilements like greed, anger and delusion gradually decrease. Our real success depends on how far we have overcome suffering. Also getting rid of suffering depends on how far we have overcome defilements. For this spiritual success, we have to reflect on impermanence again and again when we have any experience through our six senses.

If we have any experience through our senses, five aggregates arise together. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සන්ද්ධා), mental formations (*Sankhāra*-සංඛාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they cease when the conditions separate instantly. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight. The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing everything ceases without leaving anything remained. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුත්ථා සම්භුතං භුත්ථා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates.

With this understanding, we know very well every moment our experience arises and ceases. Then we can live with a fresh mind without bearing past defilements with ignorant mind. This should be our highest intension in spirituality for the bliss of Nibbāna. Also here we can live without any suffering but with mindfulness and wisdom about the world.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

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